

(Washington, DC)— Today the House of Representatives passed an amendment offered by Congresswoman Gwen Moore that would lift unnecessary restrictions that slow delivery of U.S. aid to the new democratically elected government in Liberia.

"This requirement is antiquated and only serves to harm the people of Liberia," Congresswoman Moore said. "These people, many of whom live in abject poverty, are in desperate need of immediate assistance. We need to cut through the red tape and help the new democratically elected government in its efforts to provide for the people again."

For over twenty years, the people of Liberia were subjected to the ravages of poverty, conflict, coups, and corruption. Few countries have sunk as far as far into poverty as Liberia did under the leadership of Charles Taylor and his predecessors.

In 2005, President Johnson-Sirleaf was democratically elected as the president of Liberia and has since been successfully rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, healthcare and education systems, and focusing on economic growth. Liberia today is a key U.S. partner in West Africa that enjoys strong support from all parts of the U.S. government.

However, Liberia remains on a list, which includes only six countries, that requires the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development to notify Congress prior to sending any aid to Liberia. The only other African nations on this list are Sudan and Zimbabwe. This outdated requirement once provided Congress with the ability to exercise additional oversight on Liberia when warlord Charles Taylor, who is currently on trial at The Hague for war crimes, ran the country. Today, however, this unnecessary additional notification adds two to four weeks in paperwork time, plus the 15-day mandatory notification period. Considering Liberia's six-month rainy season that prevents many construction projects from taking place, this additional delay can effectively push a project into the next dry season.

Congresswoman Moore had previously spoken personally with President Johnson-Sirleaf about the negative impact that the delay of aid has on her country.

The Moore amendment removes Liberia from that list, allowing aid to be obligated directly to Liberia without prior Congressional notification as is currently done with almost all other nations. The amendment, which is also supported by the U.S. State Department, was adopted by a voice vote during consideration of H.R. 2764, the FY2008 Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill. H.R. 2764 is expected to pass the House

later this evening.

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